



MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT

Office of Public Information

contact: Marcia McBrien | (313) 972-3219 or (517) 373-0129

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHIEF JUSTICE PRAISES JUDGES' PROGRESS ON WAYNE COUNTY JAIL OVERCROWDING

DETROIT, MI, July 10, 2002 – Judges of Wayne County Circuit's criminal division "are to be commended for the hard work and organization that has resulted in a dramatic decrease in pre-trial jail releases and an increase in case dispositions," said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan.

Because of overcrowding in the Wayne County Jail, jail officials have authorized the pre-trial releases of some defendants accused of felonies. This "chronic problem ... has existed for a decade. The causes are complex. We know that the speed with which judges try cases is not the only factor in jail overcrowding," the Chief Justice noted in a letter to the Wayne Circuit judges. "For example, I question whether current jail facilities are adequate when the number of jail beds has gone unchanged, even as the number of prisoners admitted to the jail increased by 25 percent over six years.

"I was very heartened to learn recently that the number of pretrial releases for June 2002 was the lowest since January 1999," Corrigan wrote. "The June releases fell 57 percent from the number of pretrial releases in May, which in turn were down by 21 percent from April. This is a welcome reversal of the trend in 2001, when nearly every month saw an increase in the number of pre-trial releases."

Corrigan credited stepped-up efforts and planning by the judges, which she said resulted in more cases being resolved on a timely basis, whether by trial or plea. "I know that, within the last 90 days, your court has held the highest number of jury trials for any ninety-day period since the October 1997 merger of Recorder's Court and Wayne County Circuit Court," she wrote.

In May, the court's criminal division announced that it would add four judges from the Wayne County Circuit Court's civil division as a temporary measure. The court also set a goal of disposing of 90 percent of its cases within 91 days of arraignment. In June, the court hired Bernard Kost, a manager from Compuware, to plan and organize the court's docket.

"All these measures have helped, and I believe will continue to help, as you pursue your

goals,” Corrigan told the judges. “You are to be commended for your perseverance and dedication.”

In closing, Corrigan stated, “Please know that I am proud of this court, and of each of you, for confronting the issues of jail overcrowding and case management.”

In a separate statement, Timothy Kenny, Co-chief Judge of Wayne County Circuit Court, said the Chief Justice’s letter “is a very welcome recognition of this bench’s recent achievements and the efforts of our bench’s many hard-working judges.” He added that the court “will continue our efforts and planning so that cases are resolved timely and without compromising the quality of justice.”
